

Luke Simpson

In the summer of 2008 I was fortunate enough to travel to Indonesia with help from a grant from the Westgate Teachers Fellowship Fund. My wife and I spent seven weeks traveling around the country learning about the islands and the local people.

The objective of the trip was to conduct research and take photographs to develop lesson plans for use in the marine science and biology classes at the high school. After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the marine science class began to examine the Southeast Asia region, particularly Indonesia where the epicenter of the earthquake was located. While taking an in-depth look at the causes and effects of the tsunami, it became apparent that the Island nation of Indonesia was also an excellent example to use when studying many other elements of the marine science curriculum. I have since integrated many of these examples into the class, and use the country as a case study to compare and contrast the marine science issues we are faced with in the northeast United States.

I cannot begin to list all of the experiences we encountered during this trip that I have been able to use to enrich my courses. I find that almost daily I continue to share experiences from the trip with my students. Hopefully it helps to make the courses more relevant as well as interesting and enjoyable. From meeting and talking with tsunami survivors from Banda Aceh, to seeing wild orangutans in Borneo, to crossing the Wallace line in the Lombok strait and observing the same distributions of animals that Wallace and Darwin used as evidence for evolution 150 years ago, the trip was a fantastic experience. Traveling so far away from the Cape would have been more difficult without help from the Westgate Teachers Fellowship Fund. I am thankful for their contribution and look forward to continuing to share the experiences from this trip with my classes for years to come.